

press release

KUNSTHAT ROTTERDAM

S.H.O.E.S. Head over Heels

February 1 to May 11, 2014

First press release, 12 November 2013



"To unveil a woman's personality is to study her feet". André Perugia

The Kunsthal Rotterdam will reveal the astonishing story of women's shoe design from 1900 to the present during the Spring of 2014. "S.H.O.E.S" – Sexy Heels Or Easy Sandals – will exhibit more than 500 shoes created by celebrated designers such as André Perugia and Salvatore Ferragamo, international "stars" Manolo Blahnik and Christian Louboutin, as well as contemporary and rising young talent. Shoes as genuine, finely fashioned *objets d'art*, ranging from Victorian boots to seductive slippers and from high heels to futuristic pieces. The unbelievable variety and inventiveness of so many shoe designs is a delight for the eye: the S.H.O.E.S. exhibition is a must-see for anyone with a passion for fashion.

From practical design to status symbol

Over the years various decorative elements have made their appearance into the world of shoe fashion: amongst others the floating heel, open heel, platform shoes, ankle straps and bows. Designers have constantly experimented with form, materials, colour and comfort. Cross-fertilisation and retro-reference have been combined with new experimentation. The woman's shoe has become increasingly elegant, and heel height has reached as much as 15cm. New technologies and materials such as micro-fibre, elastic and synthetics have made extreme forms, sometimes highly erotically charged, possible. The rise of the "couturier" fashion houses and their designers have taken the woman's shoe from attractive accessory to ultimate status symbol. Just as *Sex and the City* actress Sarah Jessica Parker swears by her Manolo Blahniks, many women long for new shoes as for new love.

Jewels from renowned collections

Numerous star pieces from celebrated collections will be on display in the S.H.O.E.S. exhibition – a collaboration with the Fashion Museum Hasselt – such as Perugia's surrealist 1931 design "Homage to Braque" from the International Footwear Museum in Romans-sur-Isère, as well as the first platform-sole sandal that Ferragamo designed in 1938 for Judy Garland. Naturally, there is also place for Roger Vivier, who invented the stiletto in 1954. Closer to home, many other splendid designs, such as the 1960 transparent plastic pump by Beth & Herbert Levine from the Fashion Museum Hasselt collection, and the 1985 colourful stiletto by Charles Jourdan from the Dutch Leather and Shoe Museum in Waalwijk. These grand-masters of shoe design will be featured alongside The Netherlands' own Jan Jansen, himself a member of the international elite since the early 1970s. Some well-known contemporary Dutch and Belgian designers will also be broadly represented in S.H.O.E.S., including Rem D. Koolhaas, Jan Taminiau and the rising talents Katrien Herdewijn and Nienke van Dee (winner of the Global Footwear Design Award 2013).

Co-Create with S.H.O.E.S

S.H.O.E.S. is the first exhibition in the Kunsthal's "MaakMee" (Co-Create) series, a new way of organising and curating exhibitions involving public participation, in collaboration with the BankGiro Lottery, the Dutch culture lottery-fund. Every aspect of the creation of an exhibition is dealt with in 14 questions, via www.kunsthalmaakmee.nl, and the public will help determine how S.H.O.E.S. will be presented. Contributions of the Co-Create participants will be illuminated as part of the exhibition.

Collaboration with Conny Janssen Danst

Shoe design, dance and video art come together in a striking production by the Kunsthal Rotterdam and Conny Janssen Danst during S.H.O.E.S. Filmmaker and dancer Davide Bellotta (Conny Janssen Danst) will present the video-choreography "[L]imitation", dealing with two exceptionally strong characters. Intensity and sensuality arise where there dancing feet meet. Watch the teaser here: <http://youtu.be/byTyQ5eScu8>.

The exhibition has been made possible with the cooperation of the Fashion Museum Hasselt (based on "In Her Shoes", 2009, curator Kenneth Ramaekers), and the shoes come from the collections of the Fashion Museum

Reopening of the Kunsthal, Saturday 1 February

The Kunsthal has been renovated and includes new sustainable elements such as technical installations. The inviting entrance area, which offers even better access to the café, shop and auditorium, strengthens the Kunsthal's enterprise culture and enriches the visitor experience.

The Kunsthal opens with a surprising and varied exhibition programme. 'S.H.O.E.S. Head over Heels' and 'marimekko. design for a happy life' focus on design, and the photographs by Martijn van de Griendt in 'Forever Young' depict the youth of today. 'The Second World War in 100 objects' and 'Of many feathers. Seventeenth-century watercolour drawings by Andries Beeckman' can be seen from 5 February and 22 February respectively. The exhibitions are accompanied by a varied programme of activities for schools, children and students.

Hasselt, the International Footwear Museum (Romans-sur-Isère), Museo Salvatore Ferragamo (Florence), the Bata Shoe Museum (Toronto), the Dutch Leather & Shoe Museum (Waalwijk), and the National Footwear Museum (Izegem, Belgium).

Image: Court shoes by Vivienne Westwood, 1993, Collection of the Bata Shoe Museum. Image © 2013 Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, Canada

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